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ABSTRACT

This book relates the experiences of students and teachers who spent their days in one- and two-room schoolhouses in West Texas during the first half of the 20th century. The book is based on interviews with 77 people and is divided into two sections: student recollections and teachers' memories. Former students reflect on school facilities, the hardships they endured traveling to school, their relationship with teachers, school discipline policies, recess and recreation, and family life. Former teachers reminisce about their own education, teaching methods, curriculum, their relationship with students, and their status in the community. Rural schools in West Texas were controlled by trustees, and schools functioned as the center of educational, social, political, and religious activity. School sessions were often irregular and based on the availability of funds for a teacher or on the weather and farm work. Curriculum reflected the values of a rural society, with emphasis placed on reading, spelling, handwriting, and arithmetic, as well as moral upbringing. For most students and teachers, getting to school was an ordeal: many walked several miles or rode horses or mules. Frequently, teachers were boarders, sharing a room and sometimes a bed with a stranger. In addition, teachers were often expected to help the host family with cooking, child care, and household chores. The rise and fall of the rural school in West Texas reflected the rise and fall of population patterns. As people settled the area, more schools were needed. With the coming of automobiles and mechanization, small school districts were no longer necessary and the move toward consolidation began. Includes photographs, a selected bibliography, information on interviewees, and an index. (LP)